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GOVERNMENTS**

Main Office

818 West Seventh Street
12th Floor
Los Angeles, California
90017-3435

t (213) 236-1800

f (213) 236-1825

www.scag.ca.gov

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Riverside County Transportation Commission: Robin Lowe, Hemet

Ventura County Transportation Commission: Keith Millhouse, Moorpark

MEETING OF THE

Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Monday, March 28, 2005

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

SCAG OFFICE

**818 W. 7th Street, 12th Floor
Riverside B Conference Room
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.236.1800**

VIDEO CONFERENCE LOCATION

**SCAG, Riverside Office
3600 Lime Street, Suite 216
Riverside, CA 92501
951.784.1513**

Agenda Enclosed

If members of the public wish to review the attachments or have any questions on any of the agenda items, please contact Jacob Lieb at 213.236.1921

Agenda and Minutes are available on the web at:
www.scag.ca.gov/rcp

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1965

2005

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE

AGENDA

March 28th, 2005

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Members of the public desiring to speak on an agenda item or items not on the agenda, but within the purview of the Committee, must fill out and present a speaker's card to the Assistant prior to speaking. A speaker's card must be turned in before the meeting is called to order. Comments will be limited to three minutes. The chair may limit the total time for all comments to twenty (20) minutes.

3.0 REVIEW and PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS

4.0 CONSENT CALENDAR

4.1 Minutes of January 18, 2005

4.2 Minutes of the BIA/RCP Workshop, February 25th, 2005

5.0 ACTION ITEMS

5.1 Water

Attachment Under Separate Cover

Staff will report on policies and potential actions for consideration in the development of the Water Chapter.

Recommended Action: Provide input to staff regarding issues to be addressed in the Water Chapter of the Regional Comprehensive Plan, and report to the Energy and Environment Committee.

**Dan Grisett
Sr. Reg. Planner**



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE

AGENDA

5.2 Open Space and Habitat

Ashwani Vasishth
Assoc. Planner

Attachment

Staff will report on policies and potential actions for consideration in the development of the Open Space Chapter.

Recommended Action: Provide input to staff regarding issues to be addressed in the Open Space Chapter of the Regional Comprehensive Plan, and report to the Energy and Environment Committee.

6.0 INFORMATION ITEMS

7.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

8.0 STAFF REPORT

9.0 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Any Committee members or staff desiring to place items on a future agenda may make such request. Comments should be limited to three (3) minutes.

10.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

11.0 ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force will be held in the SCAG offices on Monday, April 25, 2005.



Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Action Minutes for January 18, 2005

The following minutes are a summary of actions taken by the Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force held its meeting at the Southern California Association of Governments offices in Los Angeles. There was a video-conference at the SCAG Inland Office in Riverside. The meeting was called to order by Chair Pam O'Connor, Santa Monica. There was a quorum.

Committee Chair: Pam O'Connor, Santa Monica
Committee Vice Chair: Susan Longville, San Bernardino

Members Present

Bowlen, Paul
Feinstein, Michael
Garcia, LeAnn (video)
Miller, Mike
Nowatka, Paul
O'Connor, Pam

Representing

Manhattan Beach
Santa Monica
Grand Terrace
West Covina
Torrance
Santa Monica

Members Absent

Aldinger, Jim
Cook, Debbie
Longville, Susan
Ovitt, Gary

Representing

Manhattan Beach
Huntington Beach
SANBAG Subregion
Ontario

New Members

None

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

Pam O'Connor, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None offered.

3.0 REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS

4.0 CONSENT CALENDAR

4.1 Minutes of December 15, 2004

The Consent Calendar was approved without objection.

Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Action Minutes for January 18, 2005

5.0 ACTION ITEMS

5.1 Land Use and Housing Chapter

Jacob Lieb, Acting Lead Regional Planner, reviewed regional policies on land use and housing, and presented a preliminary action plan, including a matrix associating actions with area characteristics. Mr. Lieb went on to describe a series of activities anticipated by staff to complete a draft chapter. These activities included:

- a. holding a workshop with the Building Industry Association in February,
- b. Continuing to incorporate results of Compass implementation efforts,
- c. Compiling and circulating information Form Based Zoning,
- d. Posting and circulating preliminary drafts on the SCAG website.

The Task Force unanimously approved a report to the Community, Economic, and Human Development Committee that entailed the steps described, and that raised as an issue for CEHD consideration whether the region can, in fact, accommodate the growth anticipated.

5.2 Homeland Security Chapter

Sina Zarifi, Senior Regional Planner described the policies and potential actions for inclusion in a homeland security chapter. Homeland Security is an area in which SCAG has not traditionally had a role. Therefore, the chapter will describe the planning needs in the region, and recommend roles that SCAG and other government entities might fill.

The Task Force unanimously approved a report to the Transportation and Communications Committee, and provided input to staff on the completion of a draft chapter.

6.0 INFORMATION ITEMS

6.1 Outreach Activities/Program Calendar

Jacob Lieb, Acting Lead Regional Planner, proposed that the Task Force not meet in February in order to concentrate on the Building Industry Association joint workshop. The Task Force discussed various forums to raise the profile of the RCP work being performed. Staff agreed to circulate e-mails to schedule future meetings and workshops.

7.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

Nothing to report.

8.0 STAFF REPORT

Nothing to report.

9.0 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None

Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Action Minutes for January 18, 2005

10.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

11.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. The next Task Force was not scheduled at the time of adjournment.

Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force & The Building Industry Assn. of Southern California Workshop

Action Minutes for February 25, 2005

The following minutes are a summary of actions taken in the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) Building Industry Assn. (BIA) Workshop.

Committee Chair: Pam O'Connor, Santa Monica

| <u>Task Force Members</u> | <u>Representing</u> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cook, Debbie | SCAG |
| Feinstein, Mike | Ex-officio, Santa Monica |
| Miller, Mike | City of W. Covina |
| Nowatka, Paul | City of Torrance |

| <u>Other Attendees</u> | <u>Representing</u> | <u>Other Attendees</u> | <u>Representing</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chang, Ping | SCAG | Michael Battaglia | Standard Pacific Homes |
| Doyle, Bart | BIA/LACE - Atty | Mistrano, Sam | So. CA. Assoc. of Non-Profit Hsg. |
| Griset, Dan | SCAG | Nelson, Kurt | VCC Homes |
| Harris, Lynn | SCAG | O'Connor, Pam, Chair | SCAG/City of Santa Monica |
| Harris, Ted | SCAG | Perry, Bev | City of Brea |
| Hartley, Kirk | Wells Fargo Home Mortgage | Priest, Todd | BIA/SC |
| Hemann, Pam | BIA LACE | Reskey, Kevin | Countrywide Home Loans |
| Lieb, Jacob | SCAG | Sarifi, Sina | SCAG |
| Maupin, Doug | Maupin Dev. | Vasishth, Ashwani | SCAG |

The Workshop was started by Todd Priest of the Building Industry Assn. of Southern California. Mark Pisano gave a brief introduction. Chair Pam O'Connor then introduced Jacob Lieb.

1.0 Introductory Presentation – Regional Comprehensive Plan

Jacob Lieb gave an introductory presentation on the Regional Comprehensive Plan

2.0 SCAG's Land Use and Development Policies and the 2% Strategy

Jacob Lieb gave a presentation on SCAG's Land Use and Development policies and the 2% strategy

3.0 Solutions – Discussion/Roundtable

A roundtable discussion was held facilitated by Chair O'Connor. There was more dialogue on education, infrastructure needs, Comprehensive Planning, funding/mitigation needs, leadership development, Best Practices Promotion.

Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force & The Building Industry Assn. of Southern California Workshop

Action Minutes for February 25, 2005

Following are some ideas and problems to overcome that were brought up by the members.

- Need more infill capacity dialogue
- Traffic impacts
- Infrastructure (e.g., pipes), aging infrastructure (who pays?)
- Citizen Education – Local and regional level
- Best Practices
- Reimbursement practices infrastructure improvements
- Variance and associated issues
- Can projects be “fiscally predictable?”
- Residential “self-interest” “what’s in it for me?”
- Prop 13
- Non-standard “brown field” processes among cities
- Increased insurance for attached housing - Legal liability requirements
- What happens when the “buy up” market dries up? Who has \$300K down payment?
- Expanded use of infill incentives
- Costs of growth exceed income for residential benefits/services
- How can mortgage industry interface with building industry to address affordability?
- Layers of loan guarantees to allow “no down” financing, reduces profit incentives
- Deed restrictions
- General Plans
- Electeds need training
- Training funds needed
- Rose Foundation on Civic Planning
- Shift zoning to Force Changes?
- Legislative hurdles
- “Specific Plan” is tool of choice
- But how can we fund Specific Plans?
- No standard mixed-use zoning ordinances
- Regulatory hurdles to mixed use
- Air-Quality
- Transportation must support infill
- Job/housing balance
- Redevelopment zones around transit stations with inclusionary zoning
- Perceived benefits to residents
- Clarity of legislation
- Worry that state says “you fix this or we will”
- Tenementization
- Cost of tenementization on city services
- Local elected officials need long-term fiscal mgmt.
- Uniform regional traffic mitigation
- Corridors development
- Requires cities to cooperate
- Reasonable mitigation fees
- used at local level
- “Proportionality”
- City competition
- City/state competition for dollars
- Affordability
- End user ultimately pays

4.0 Chair O’Connor adjourned the workshop at 12 p.m.

MEMO

DATE: March 17, 2005

TO: Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force

FROM: Ashwani Vasishth, vasishth@scag.ca.gov, (213) 236-1908

RE: SCAG Policies Pertaining to Habitat and Open Space Planning

Action:

Provide input to Staff regarding issues to be addressed in the Habitat and Open Space chapter of the Regional Comprehensive Plan, and report progress to the Energy and Environment Committee at its next meeting.

Summary:

Based on SCAG's Compass Growth Visioning document, the 2004 RTP Environmental Impact Report, and the 1996 Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide, a number of policies recommendations, and actions which SCAG has put forth for the region have been compiled. A table of these policies, recommendations and actions is appended below. These will be integrated into the Habitat and Open Space Chapter of the 2005 RCP, and will inform the proposed Action Plan component of the Chapter.

A stakeholder meeting to further analyze these policies, recommendations and actions, using Concept Mapping ranking and sorting protocols will be arranged over the next month.

Background:

The SCAG region is a complex ecological space, with considerable variations in land use and character. A systems approach is proposed, which conceptualizes nature as being organized in a nested hierarchy, forming levels of organization, in which each level emerges out of the interactions between component sub-systems, and where these sub-systems are seen to be nested within their wider system. So, for instance, local jurisdictions can be seen to be nested as sub-systems within the system that is Southern California, which in turn is nested, along with other such regional systems, within the supra-system that is the State of California. Such a nested ecosystem approach would best serve to organize the ways in which regional, sub-regional and supra-regional plans and programs are seen to be integrated, and known to form and shape one another, across levels of organization.

Conventional approaches to habitat conservation have relied centrally on the designation of reserves to support various endangered and threatened plant and animal species, in an effort to assure their long-term survival and recovery. A key model to consider, in assessing the diverse ways in which the region deals with Habitat and Open Space issues is the Habitat

Conservation Plan (HCP) process, and also the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) process. Such HCPs and NCCPs are a vital component of regional ecological planning. However, recent developments in ecosystem ecology—such as patch dynamics and perturbation ecology—are showing that there are other sorts of interventions that can be used to support and reinforce the establishment of the more traditional set-aside reserves approach to conservation planning. In one sense, the call from contemporary ecosystem ecology *is to better integrate humans as components of ecosystems*, rather than relying on the separation of land uses for human and natural communities.

This approach is referred to as ecosystem management, and focuses on establishing protocols to assure the integrity of ecological processes and functions vital to the health and well-being of organisms and entities, including humans, within the region. Such an approach is most appropriate to support the four goals of the Southern California Compass Growth Visioning process—namely, mobility, livability, prosperity and sustainability. Recognizing the inherent inter-dependence amongst components of the web of life and processes that is nature, and then it becomes vital that we use just such a way of recognizing this nested inter-dependence in how we plan.

A central element to such an approach to ecosystem management is the percolation of native habitats into urban and sub-urban cores. An emphasis on ecologically appropriate community forestry, coupled with efforts to promote and establish the widespread use of native vegetation (xeriscape, in the case of Southern California), would go a long way to restoring the ecological mosaic that would support the health of areas set aside for nature, while at the same time increasing the resilience of regional ecosystems. Relatedly, the propagation of pervious surfaces, to replace the vast and sprawling tracts of impervious surfaces that human habitation is accustomed to laying down, would puncture the land, permitting improved ground-water recharge, better storm-water management, enhanced health in soils, and better integration across land uses in how natural habitats are integrated at the microbial and process-function levels.

As such, SCAG's proposed Habitat and Open Space chapter will present SCAG's existing policies in this regard as supportive of such an ecosystem approach to nature management. Conventional concerns with set-aside open space and habitat will be shown to be most effective when integrated with the percolation of natural habitat elements such as native landscaping and tree plantation efforts, and puncturing the acres of impervious pavements we conventionally rest our settlements upon.

One or more subsequent strategic stakeholder-based workshops will be used to shape the Action Plan component of this chapter. A protocol called Concept Mapping, will be used to rank-order and sort the various policies, recommendations and action into a meaningful and integrated whole. Staff will summarize best-practices associated with SCAG policies and recommendations, and will use the Action Plan component to derive the indicators of progress that will punctuate the Habitat and Open Space Chapter.

SCAG Policies that Pertain to Habitat and Open Space Planning

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Enhance Recreation and Tourism Opportunities</p> <p>Provide adequate land resources to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the present and future residents in the region and to promote tourism in the region.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Maintain Economic Productivity of Regional Lands</p> <p>Maintain adequate viable resource production lands, particularly lands devoted to commercial agriculture and mining operations.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> |
| <p>Utilize Growth Forecasts In Open Space Planning</p> <p>The population, housing, and jobs forecasts, which are adopted by SCAG's Regional Council and that reflect local plans and policies, shall be used by SCAG in all phases of implementation and review.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Use Proactive Participatory Systems Approach for Open Space and Recreation Planning</p> <p>Future impacts to open space and recreation lands shall be avoided through cooperation, information sharing, and program development during the update of the Open Space and Conservation chapter of SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide and through SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Encourage Adaptive Reuse for Growth</p> <p>Encourage patterns of urban development and land use, which reduce costs on infrastructure construction and make better use of existing facilities.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Use Proactive Participatory Systems Approach for Ecological Conservation Planning</p> <p>Minimize future impacts to biological resources through cooperation, information sharing, and program development during the update of the Habitat and Open Space chapter of SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan, through SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee and in consultation with resource agencies.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Encourage Planning for Environmentally Sensitive Lands</p> <p>Encourage planned development in locations least likely to cause environmental impact.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Use Proactive Participatory Systems Approach for Cultural Resource Planning</p> <p>Minimize future impacts to cultural resources through cooperation, information sharing, and program development of SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide, through SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee and in consultation with other resource agencies (such as the Office of Historic Preservation), during this update process.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |

SCAG Policies that Pertain to Habitat and Open Space Planning

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|---|---|
| <p>Preserve Forests and Designated Open Spaces</p> <p>National Forests shall remain permanently preserved and used as open space. SCAG shall support policies and actions that preserve open space areas identified in local, state, and federal plans.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Promote Low-impact Development Techniques</p> <p>Promote water-efficient land use development.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Protect Ecologically Productive Lands</p> <p>Support the protection of vital resources such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, production lands, and land containing unique and endangered plants and animals.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Promote Fire-wise Land Management</p> <p>Encourage the use of fire-resistant vegetation and the elimination of brush and chaparral in the immediate vicinity of development in areas with high fire threat.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Preserve Cultural and Archeological Lands</p> <p>Encourage the implementation of measures aimed at the preservation and protection of recorded and unrecorded cultural resources and archaeological sites.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Promote Fire Management Planning</p> <p>Help reduce fire threats in the region as part of the Growth Visioning process and as policies in the update of SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Avoid Hazardous Lands</p> <p>Discourage development, or encourage the use of special design requirements, in areas with steep slopes, high fire, flood, and seismic hazards.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Coordinate Recreational Planning Within and Across Region</p> <p>Encourage member jurisdictions to work as partners to address regional outdoor recreation needs and to acquire the necessary funding for the implementation of their plans and programs.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |

SCAG Policies that Pertain to Habitat and Open Space Planning

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| <p>Support Sustainability Planning for Communities</p> <p>Support local jurisdictions and other service providers in their efforts to develop sustainable communities and provide, equally to all members of society, accessible and effective services such as: public education, housing, health care, social services, recreational facilities, law enforcement, and fire protection.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Encourage Conservation of Agricultural Lands</p> <p>Encourage implementation agencies to obtain assistance from the American Farmland Trust in developing and implementing farmland conservation measures.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Improve Access to Open Space</p> <p>Increase the accessibility to open space lands for outdoor recreation.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Encourage Preservation of Agricultural Lands</p> <p>Encourage implementation agencies to avoid the premature conversion of farmlands by promoting infill development and the continuation of agricultural uses until urban development is imminent; if development of agricultural lands is necessary, growth should be directed to those lands on which the continued viability of agricultural production has been compromised by surrounding urban development or the loss of local markets.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Enhance Sustainable Recreation Resource Management</p> <p>Promote self-sustaining regional recreation resources and facilities.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Encourage Protection of Agricultural Lands</p> <p>Encourage implementation agencies to establish transfer of development rights (TDR) programs to direct growth to less agriculturally valuable lands (while considering the potential effects at the sites receiving the transfer) and ensure the continued protection of the most agriculturally valuable land within each county through the purchase of the development rights for these lands.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Maintain Buffer Zones</p> <p>Maintain open space for adequate protection of lives and properties against natural and man-made hazards.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Promote Multiple-Use Approach To Development</p> <p>Encourage that multiple use of spaces be allowed as feasible and practical, and encourage redevelopment activities to focus some investment on recreation uses so as to provide more opportunities for access to open space close to the urban core.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |

SCAG Policies that Pertain to Habitat and Open Space Planning

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|---|---|
| <p>Avoid Hazardous Areas</p> <p>Minimize potentially hazardous developments in hillsides, canyons, areas susceptible to flooding, earthquakes, wildfire and other known hazards, and areas with limited access for emergency equipment.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Support Cooperative Planning Across Levels of Organization (Systems Approach)</p> <p>Encourage member jurisdictions that have trails and trail segments determined to be regionally significant to work together to support regional trail networks. SCAG shall encourage joint use of utility, transportation and other rights-of-way, greenbelts, and biodiversity areas.</p> <p>[2004 RTP-EIR]</p> |
| <p>Avoid Areas that Risk Health and Safety</p> <p>Minimize public expenditure for infrastructure and facilities to support urban type land uses in areas where public health and safety could not be guaranteed.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Support Livability and Integrate Natural and Human Uses of the Land</p> <p>Foster livability in all communities.</p> <p>[Growth Vision]</p> |
| <p>Utilize Effective Ecosystem Management Planning</p> <p>Develop well-managed viable ecosystems or known habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species, including wetlands.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Areas</p> <p>Preserve rural, agricultural, recreational, and environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <p>[Growth Vision]</p> |
| <p>Use An Ecosystem Approach To Regional Planning</p> <p>Encourage "watershed management" programs and strategies, recognizing the primary role of local governments in such efforts.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas</p> <p>Protect sensitive environmental features such as steep slopes, wetlands, and stream corridors from development.</p> <p>[Growth Vision]</p> |

SCAG Policies that Pertain to Habitat and Open Space Planning

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Support Flow of Data and Information for Systems Approach to Planning</p> <p>Coordinate watershed management planning at the subregional level by (1) providing consistent regional data; (2) serving as a liaison between affected local, state, and federal watershed management agencies; and (3) ensuring that watershed planning is consistent with other planning objectives (e. g., transportation, air quality, water supply).</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Support Sustainability Planning and Design</p> <p>Utilize "green" development techniques.</p> <p>[Growth Vision]</p> |
| <p>Support Wetland Conservation</p> <p>Support regional efforts to identify and cooperatively plan for wetlands to facilitate both sustaining the amount and quality of wetlands in the region and expediting the process for obtaining wetlands permits.</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Promote Smart Growth</p> <p>Promote infill development and redevelopment to revitalize existing communities.</p> <p>[Growth Vision]</p> |
| <p>Encourage Integrative Planning</p> <p>Encourage mitigation measures that reduce noise in certain locations, measures aimed at preservation of biological and ecological resources, measures that would reduce exposure to seismic hazards, minimize earthquake damage, and to develop emergency response and recovery plans</p> <p>[1996 RCPG]</p> | <p>Ensure adequate access to open space</p> <p>[Growth Vision]</p> |

From: Ashwani VASISHTH
To: Alfredo Gonzales; Andrew E. Jonas; Andy Lipkis; Bob Dulla; Brian Edwards; California Wilderness Coalition; Dan Silver; David C. Sloane; Elizabeth Chatten; Eric Oldar; Gail Ruderman Feuer; Gilberto Ruiz; Greg McPherson; Gretchen Hardison; Jennifer Scott-Lifland; Jennifer Wolch; Jim Sullivan; John S. Zinner; Kristeen Penrod; Kristi Lovelady; Lindell Marsh; Michael F. Allen; Mike Schulz; Rick Thomas; Rosemary Flynn; Stephanie Pincetl; Todd Campbell; Tom Larson; William A. Jury
Subject: Request for input - Habitat and Open Space Chapter of the 2005 RCP

I am writing you to seek your participation in the preparation of a Habitat and Open Space Action Plan for the six-county Southern California region, based on existing regional policies. As some of you know, I have a particular interest in pushing for an integrative ecosystem approach to regional land use planning, holistically defined.[1] SCAG is in the process of preparing a Regional Comprehensive Plan. Actually, it is neither a plan, nor comprehensive, but rather an effort to integratively assess and present existing SCAG policies.[2] One of the chapters is Habitat and Open Space.

I am specifically requesting your assistance, from your integrative perspective as policy-makers and planners within the Southern California region, in generating a list of a few critical policies, actions, recommendations, or strategies (three to five, more or less is fine), that you would put on your own wish list for Southern California. What are the sorts of things you would like to see happen, at whatever scale you prefer to use, in the context of habitat and open space management within the region? Stream-of-consciousness is fine, off-the-cuff is great. There will be additional subsequent opportunities to rank and sort policies, in the form of concept mapping exercises, if you care to participate further.

It would be most helpful if you could e-mail your brief list to me, perhaps by Wednesday, March 23, 2005. I do so hope you can participate, to whatever extent you can spare the time, and even remotely--e-mail is great for this.[3] And if you think there are others who might have useful ideas, please do feel free to forward this message, or to let me know who they are.

There is an RCP Task Force meeting scheduled for March 28, 2005, for which an agenda will be sent out later this week, along with a list of existing and relevant SCAG policies, and these will form the basis for discussion regarding the Action Plan portion of the Habitat and Open Space chapter.[4] Your participation in the meeting, at 10:30 AM, would be valuable to us, I'm certain. I can try to set up a conference line for call-ins, if you think that helpful.

Thank you,

Ashwani
 Vasishth <vasishth@scag.ca.gov> ph (213) 236-1908
 Environmental Planner, Southern California Assn of Govts
 818 W. 7th St, Los Angeles, CA 90017 fax (213) 236-1963
<http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~vasishth>

1. See, for instance, http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~vasishth/Vasishth-Ecological_Planning.pdf.

2. In part the document will be a guide for sub-regional and local entities, showing them ways in which they can mesh with, gain from, or support regional objectives. In part it will be an Action Plan, showing specific ways in which sub- and supra-regional entities can act in support of SCAG's Compass Growth Visioning process <<http://www.socalcompass.org/>>. And in part it will form a basis for our own inter-governmental review process, by specifying the factors and issues by which we intend to measure our input into sub- and supra-regional plans and programs.

3. There's a great article in the current issue of Environment, that reviews and assesses a wide range of

web technologies that support participatory decision making, by the way. William Pike, et. al., Retooling Collaboration, Environment, March 2005. I have a digital copy, if you're interested. I had also attended an Environmental Information Management Symposium, where various groups discussed their experiences with web-shared dataset management. I have some information from there as well. Its the information management costs of participatory decision making that have held adaptive ecosystem management systems approaches back so far, it seems to me, but that's all beginning to change rather quickly now, I think.

4. As an aside, the three broad policy actions I am hoping to push, through this process, are: a) the percolation of habitat conservation planning strategies into the urban core (native vegetation, etc. <http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~vasishth/Vasishth-Urbanizing_HCPs.pdf>); b) regional urban forestry (heat island mitigation, habitat integration, storm water management, groundwater recharge, etc.); and c) pervious surface propagation within the urban and suburban core. All these sorts of interventions, and their related aspects can be, at the very least, encouraged by the preparation of model ordinances, best practice protocols, and information resource compilations aimed at both planners and policy makers.

CC: Ashwani VASISHTH; Jacob Lieb; Sylvia Patsaouras